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Assature autem perdicum et fasianorum et turturum nullo indigent sapore nisi sale. Nota universaliter tam pro carnibus quam piscibus quod quanto carnes sunt aut pisces viscosiores et difficilioris digestionis et maioris superfluitatis et humidioris nature tanto indigent saporibus calidioribus et acutioribus ut piperata etc. Gallinarum autem elixatarum est ysopus petrocilii et croci et assatarum est liquor descendens cum saporì convenienti respectu temporis. Et hec de saporibus breviter sufficiunt.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

NOTES ON EARLY CHRISTIAN LIBRARIES IN ROME

By ETHEL D. ROBERTS

IT was the opinion of Monsignor Rocca, sometime librarian of the Holy See, that the library had its beginning from St Peter himself, and another learned man attributes its founding to St Clement, who was elected to the Papal Chair in the year 93. The *Martyrium Clementis*, which is traditionally a contemporary document, attributes to this Pope the compilation of a list of the poor in all the regions of Rome, which would of course have been kept in the archives of the time.¹ However that may be, it is certain that before any central Christian library existed in Rome, individual churches possessed libraries or collections of codices.² That Christian communities soon after the propagation of the Gospel provided themselves with libraries is proved by many passages in the *Acta Sincera Martyrum* from the time of Nero to Julian the Apostate. These naturally differed in size, but besides the sacred scriptures, contained also commentaries and other works by Fathers and Doctors of the Church, together with the archives, lists of communicants, pastoral letters, and especially the Acts of the local martyrs and the reports of their judicial trials, the latter procured often at great cost. The *Liber Pontificalis* relates that a certain priest Massimus, commissioned by Pope Anteros in the third century to obtain such a report, lost his own life in the attempt. The ecclesiastical tribunals, too, had to have all documents connected with their trials preserved, and the library of the church was also the repository of certain legal documents relating to the freeing of slaves, an act which after Constantine was solemnly performed in the churches.³ Other records of great importance were the professions of faith or recantations of error required from professors of philosophy and theology suspected of heresy, or at least of unsound doctrine. Tertullian mentions such a case and Origen sent a written *libellum poenitentiae* to Fabianus.⁴

Justinian required that a copy of his laws should be kept in the treasury of the Church; codices, like the sacred vessels, being regarded as treasures. In some cases, the collection of codices was placed in the apse of the church which was

¹ Cabrol, *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne* (Paris, 1910), s.v. *Bibliothèque*.

² An ancient library was attached to the church of San Teodoro which disappeared during the sack of Rome in 1526 (Tucker and Malletson, *Handbook of Christian & Ecclesiastical Rome*, 1 [London, 1897], 347).

³ Cabrol, *op. cit.*

⁴ De Rossi, 'La biblioteca della Sede Apostolica' *Studi di storia e diritto*, vol. v (1884).

divided into three hemicycles, the central one containing the episcopal throne, the one on the right the sacred vessels, the one on the left the codices. That some of these libraries were considered important is attested by the fact that in the decree of confiscation of church property under Diocletian the libraries were especially mentioned.

Such documents as these and those connected with the widespread charities of the church at Rome, belonging as they did rather to the diocese than to any individual church, seemed to need a central repository, and it remained for Pope Damasus (366–384), that indefatigable writer of inscriptions, to provide a suitable library for the Apostolic See. He selected as its site the barracks of the green squadron of charioteers and riders of the Circus Maximus, and modelled it after the library at Pergamon and that of the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine. He built a basilica dedicated to San Lorenzo and surrounded it by a square portico. Into this opened the small rooms containing the various divisions of the library.¹ Here he placed an inscription, the last three verses of which, translated from Duchesne's rendering, are as follows: 'I have erected this structure for the archives of the Roman Church; I have surrounded it with porticoes on either side; and I have given it my name which I hope will be remembered for centuries.'

Although the original building was torn down and the great palace of the Cancelleria erected on its site, the church of San Lorenzo within its walls still bears the name of Damasus, San Lorenzo in Damaso. St Jerome, contemporary and friend of Damasus, asserts that the archives were shown to anyone on request, and could be copied on application to the Keeper of the Archives. It is on record that St Jerome sent one of his contradictors to verify certain statements. 'If you suspect me of falsifying, why don't you look in the archives of the Roman Church?' And he writes to Pammachius, '... search in the libraries of the churches and you will arrive more quickly at your desired end.'²

It is not known just how long the library remained in this building, but as early as the seventh century the Lateran Palace contained the archives and other books belonging to the Holy See. In the troublous times of the tenth century, the most valuable documents were transferred to a stronghold built especially for them, the *Turris Cartularia*, a massive tower built by the Frangipani, to which the triumphal arch of Titus served as a buttress. Honorius III, who died in 1227, is the last Pope who saw the volumes; he studied them carefully and makes express mention of them.

The earliest mention of papal archives is in the time of Pope Julius I (337–352), before Pope Damasus had built his library. Frequent mention of them is found from the time of Damasus; Boniface I, Celestin I, Gelasius I, and Hormisdas all mention the 'scrinium sedis apostolae.' Gelasius wrote tracts against Eutyches and Nestor, besides hymns and a Sacramentary, and it is distinctly stated in his *Life* that these were deposited in the library. Pope Hilary (461–468) established

¹ According to De Rossi and Lanciani, but J. W. Clark (*Care of Books*) is unwilling to accept this theory of the arrangement of the portico.

² Beheim. *Dissertatio de archivis sive tabulariis veterum Christianorum* (Nuremberg, 1722).

two libraries, probably intended for pilgrims, near the church of San Lorenzo fuori le Muri.

To the pontificate of Gelasius I or of Hormisdas ancient writers attribute the decree, *De recipiendis et non recipiendis*, a decree which seems to show that even so early it was necessary to distinguish among gifts to a library. The list of titles to be admitted furnishes an excellent idea of the contents of these early libraries: Canonical books of Holy Scripture, Books of the Councils of the Church, Works of the Fathers, Epistles and Decretals, Acts of the Martyrs, Lives of the Saints, Ecclesiastical History in prose and verse, Apocryphal books and such works as are to be read with caution, and finally, works of heretics (which one would suspect were also to be read cautiously.)

Besides these divisions, the archives were to be divided into two parts, as applying to the universal church or to distinct dioceses, and all such documents were to be arranged chronologically.¹ The epistles of the Popes were numbered in order, these numbers still being preserved in the oldest collections of canons. Pope Vigilius in 544 gave a copy of the *Acts of the Apostles* versified by the sub-deacon Aratorus, 'to be put into the library.' Gregory the Great says of his Homilies that 'they are kept in the library of the church where they may be found.'²

The Library of the Apostolic See at first sent gifts of codices to many church libraries at home and abroad, but about the middle of the seventh century it had to give up this practice, only lending such codices to be transcribed. There is a touching story of the Venerable Bede who, having had the privilege of borrowing some codices for this purpose, had a beautiful copy of the Scriptures made in his monastery and started to go to Rome to present it to the Pope as an expression of appreciation for the loan. He died on the way, but his companions continued their journey and presented it in his name.

In the sixth century, St Gregory wrote to Narses asking the loan of the most ancient manuscripts of the Council of Ephesus, promising to return them after reading them; indicating an arrangement for interlibrary loan between Rome and Constantinople. Another letter of St Gregory's shows the same agreement with the Church in Spain.³

The Rule of St Pachomius, founder of Christian monasticism in the third century, offers some interesting details of the distribution of books among the monks, their classification and the care that should be taken of them by their readers; for example, that they should not be left lying open when a monk quitted his cell. The Rule also required that two monks should be in charge of the library.⁴

¹ Pope Deusdedit (615-618), in a letter to Gordianus, recalls having found records of the churches of Isauria, Ephesus, Jerusalem, and others.

² It would be a mistake to suppose that profane writers were unrepresented, especially when one recalls St Paul's citations from them. Cahier remarks that it was quite common for churches to have two libraries, one within the sanctuary, dedicated to the Sacred Scriptures, ecclesiastical writings etc., another somewhat removed, for books of secular studies and philosophy; cf. Cahier, *Nouveaux Melanges d'Archeologie*, vol. iv, *Bibliothèques* (Paris, 1897).

³ Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, S. Gregory, *Epp.*, Bk. vi, pp. 14; Bk. i, Ep. 43.

⁴ Cahier, *op. cit.*, vol. iv.

The librarian of the mediaeval library went by various names. Such as *bibliothecarius*, *notarius*, *scrinarius*, correspond more or less to our modern title. But *custos sacrarii* and other terms indicate that he often filled a double office as custodian of the sacred vessels and other treasures. Very often the choirmaster was also the librarian. Even the office of cellarer was sometimes joined to that of librarian, the supplying of food and drink for the bodily needs of the brethren of the monastery going hand in hand with the satisfying of their mental hunger. An example of the existence of this double function and a delightful precursor of our rules for the circulation of books is contained in the Rule of the Abbey of Saint Maurice d'Againe (sixth century) which reads as follows: 'Qui cellario vel codicibus praeponeantur sine murmuratione serviant fratribus. Codices qui extra horam petierint non accipiant; et quis apud se habuerint amplius quam constitutum est retinere non audeant.' Which may be translated: 'Whoever may be put in charge of the cellar or the books should serve the brothers without grumbling. When they demand books out of hours they should not have them; and if any have in their possession more than is permitted they should not dare to keep them.'¹

We have already had mention of the librarian of the Damascan library to whom application had to be made for the privilege of transcribing manuscripts. That the librarian was not only a custodian but often a man of learning is indicated by the record that the librarian (he is called *Primicerius notariorum*) of the library of the Lateran Palace at the time of the Church Council of 640 was able to lay his hands at once on any book or record wanted by members of the Council, and to translate at sight Greek into Latin. This Council made such use of the library that De Rossi says that the Acts of the Council almost furnish an index of its contents. The size of the library in this century may be judged by the fact that a work of St Gregory's, *De Moralibus*, was once sought there (presumably not by the librarian mentioned above) and 'prae multitudinem aliorum librorum non potuit repereri.'² The office of custodian of the library was from the first an honorable one being entrusted to the *lectores* or *diaconi* in the case of the early church libraries, and after the formation of the central library of the Apostolic See the librarian became a more and more important personage. His Holiness Pope Pius XI, is not by any means the first one to occupy the papal chair. As far back as the seventh century, Pope Sergius I appointed the future Pope Gregory II, while still a deacon, custodian of the library.

Of course the catalogues of these early libraries, like the books themselves, perished in the wars and tumults of the time. There remain in Rome, however, two very ancient catalogues; one the list of books carved on the seated statue of St Hippolytus, a work of the third century now in the Lateran Museum, the other on a stone tablet discovered in 1725 at the ancient church of San Clemente, which records a gift of books made to that church during the pontificate of Zacharias (741-752), by a certain Gregorius who describes himself as 'primus presbyter almae Sedes Apostolicae, huiusque tituli gerens'; as we might say, a titular cardinal of that church. Recalling that the Israelites offered gifts of gold and silver and

¹ Cahier, *op. cit.*, vol. iv.

² De Rossi, *op. cit.*

other precious things to God, he asks to have his gift received like the widow's mite. Then follows a list of books of the Old and New Testaments.

The Pope Zacharias, to whom reference is made in this inscription, took much interest in the library at the Lateran Palace. It is told of him that during his stay there he caused to be arranged in order all the books which are read at Matins; and he also built a portico and a tower before the library with bronze gates and doors, and within the tower a triclinium upon whose walls were painted maps of the inhabited earth and appropriate verses.¹

Perhaps these notes should also include mention of an early library somewhat different from those described in the foregoing pages. The name of a Pope of the sixth century is connected with a large ruin which visitors to Rome may recall in the grounds of San Gregorio. It is evident that the building is of early construction, and a tablet affixed to one wall bears the inscription, 'Bibliotheca Agapeti I, 535-536.' This Agapetus is the Pope who was sent by the Gothic King Theodatus to persuade the Emperor Justinian to desist from war against him. Agapetus was more successful in securing the repentance of the Emperor for having upheld the Eutychian heresy; (*vide* Dante, *Paradiso*, VI, 16-18), but died in Constantinople without fulfilling the King's mission, also bringing to an end a project which Agapetus, urged thereto by his friend Cassiodorus, had entertained for establishing at Rome a school of theology and literature. It had gone so far as the establishment of a library in a spacious and well-lighted hall, as the ruin attests. An inscription still existed there when the 'Anonymus Einsiedlensis' visited Rome at the end of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century and copied all the inscriptions which interested him. It reads, as translated by Lanciani² and somewhat abbreviated, as follows: 'Here you see assembled together with Agapetus, the founder of the library, the venerable array of the Fathers of the Church ready to explain to you the mystic words of the Scriptures'; indicating that the hall was furnished with *armaria* or bookcases, above which were busts or medallions of the Fathers, including Agapetus himself. At that time the library formed part of the monastery of St Gregory, it being conjectured on very reasonable grounds that the latter was of the same family as Pope Agapetus, and inherited the property.

Of the failure of this plan Cassiodorus wrote sadly that 'the flames of war and turbulent civil strife prevented the fulfillment of my desire, for the arts of peace have no place in unquiet times.'³ Even so in the fortunes of war and civil strife the carefully collected books and records of these earliest centuries of the Church at Rome perished. Meanwhile new history was being made and the Church lived to build new libraries and amass new records.

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¹ *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne (London, 1886) Zacharias, *Vita*.

² Lanciani, *Ancient Rome* (New York, 1888), p. 190.

³ 'Sed propter bella ferventia et turbulenta nimis in Italico regno certamina, desiderium meum nullatenus valuisset impleri, quoniam non habet locum res pacis temporibus inquietis.' *De Institutione divinarum litterarum*, Praefatio.